

THE TIMES**SE** Features**HD** fiction**WC** 234 words**PD** 20 April 2019**SN** The Times**SC** T**ED** 1; National**PG** 18**LA** English**CY** © Times Newspapers Limited 2019**LP**

paperbacks

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The Overstory by Richard Powers Vintage, 625pp; £8.99 This is a big novel that tells us as much about trees as Moby-Dick does about whales. It is very nearly a masterpiece. The novel follows the family histories and early lives of nine loners and misfits, all of whom have a connection to trees, then the story of their coming together in an anti-logging protest. Things go a little far as peaceful protest spills over into ecoterrorism. But The Overstory, which won the Pulitzer prize for fiction this week, is overlong it would have been even better if its production had not cost the lives of quite so many trees. Jonathan Bate Lethal White by Robert Galbraith Sphere, 776pp; £8.99 Robert Galbraith is the crime fiction pen name of JK Rowling. The fame of the eccentric ex-army, one-legged private detective Cormoran Strike has spread, making him much in demand. He gets involved in a variety of cases, including the blackmailing of a government minister and the strangling of a child. There are interesting developments in his relationship with his assistant, Robin Ellacott, whom he had sacked, but who now returns. Lethal White is a cut above the other Strike novels: more ambitious, sophisticated and stylish. Yet that does not necessarily mean that it is the most satisfying or engrossing read; its length prevents that. Marcel Berlins

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Text	"then the story of their coming together in an anti-logging protest. Things go a little far as peaceful protest spills over into ecoterrorism . But The Overstory, which won the Pulitzer prize for fiction this week, is overlong it would have been even better"
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